



To: The Appropriations Committee

From: Jennifer McTiernan H., Executive Director, CitySeed

Re: Bill 828, Sec. 1w and the Impact of Loss of Funding from PA 05-228 - An Act Concerning Farm Land Preservation, Land Protection, Affordable Housing, and Historic Preservation (also known as the Community Investment Act of 2005).

Date: February 16, 2009

In these challenging economic times, leaders and communities at every level will be required to make difficult budgetary decisions. The one silver lining is that a situation like ours offers the opportunity to take a hard look at programs and trim back ones that are not meeting their objectives, while protecting those that are effective and have an impact even beyond the ones intended. I am writing today to strongly, strongly urge the Appropriations Committee to recognize the outstanding accomplishments and contributions to Connecticut of the Community Investment Act and to prevent the \$12 million funding stream from this act being re-directed for general purposes.

Redirecting funding from this program will:

- 1. Deal a fatal blow to the ability of the farmland preservation to stretch taxpayer dollars during a weak economy – thereby preserving more farms for considerably less than in previous years.** With falling real estate prices, the state will be able to meet its goal of preserving farmland much easier and more cost-effective. This is the time to invest more money in the program, not to cut it!
- 2. Deal a fatal blow to the CT Farmland Preservation Program and put in jeopardy MILLIONS of FEDERAL DOLLARS that Connecticut now receives to match its own investment in farmland.** Essentially, stripping this program of its state funding will also strip it of its federal funding, estimated to be over \$5 million each year over the next several years.
- 3. Deal a fatal blow to the ability of communities and farms to craft creative solutions to meet their own challenges and needs in promoting farmland preservation and farm viability.** This program positively and quantifiably impacts a wide range of communities – urban and rural alike - across the state. It is incredibly effective and has well thought out mechanisms in place to promote the viability of farms and farmland on a number of levels. Not only does a large portion of funding go to preserving farmland, but it also funds the needed staff at the Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program, as well as offering a grant program for farmers, towns and non-profits. In fact, funds from this grant program have enabled towns, farms and communities across the state to purposefully meet their own self-identified needs, and resulting in quantifiable measures that demonstrate the impact of the program. For example, with funding from the Agriculture Viability grant, CitySeed was able to create bilingual display boards for every WIC and Food Stamp office in the state, thereby reaching over 250,000 people who receive food assistance benefits and letting them know these benefits can be used to purchase fresh, healthy food from local farms.

CitySeed is a non-profit organization that operates a network of farmers' markets in the City of New Haven and seeks to promote increased access to local, healthy food and farm viability. During the 2008 market season, City Farmers' Markets redeemed over \$78,500 in WIC and Food Stamps from New Haven residents who are most nutritionally at-risk. In addition, these four, outdoor markets contributed over \$1.75 million to the local economy. We know firsthand the positive impact local agriculture and farms can have on a community in terms of creating jobs, building community and ensuring inner-city residents have access to fresh, healthy food. Community Investment Act funding has been a driver of these forces for good. For the health of our urban and rural communities alike, I therefore strongly urge you to preserve the Community Investment Act funding so that it can continue to positively and quantifiably impact communities across the state to the benefit of all.